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WHALESHIPS OF NEW BEDFORD

Sixty Plates

FROM DRAWINGS BY
CLIFFORD W. ASHLEY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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1929

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INTRODUCTION

FORTY years ago a little boy sat on the old string-piece of his grandfather's stone wharf at Fairhaven. Close by lay a whaleship, out in the stream another rode at anchor, and over on the New Bedford shore near the old winding wooden bridge a dozen tall spars overtopped the granite warehouses. Even then he felt that these great ships were but the survivors of a mightier age, that in some way they were no longer the focal point of the busy community, that the cotton-mills with their tall stacks had superseded the whaling industry.

He knew, though, of the glories of the older days. In the library of his grandfather's homestead, bound volumes of the pictorial reviews of the fifties showed woodcuts of the Whaling Fleet — ships by the score, sailing for the South Atlantic, for the Indian Ocean, for the North Pacific. On the wall was a lithograph of the Stone Fleet — mile after mile of vessels headed south to be sunk at the mouth of a Confederate harbor.

He was brought up on the stories of how the Florida, the Shenandoah, the Sumter, and the Alabama drove the whaleships off the seas — or burned them.

Up in the attic in one of the old trunks were the old logbooks, canvas-bound, the official reports to the owners from the whaling masters of the first half of the century. Stencilled whales in the margin, the speaking of other ships, the total of the catch, the visits to Fayal, to the Falklands, to Unalaska, the accountings to the owners, the lay of the crew — here was the record.

Years later, with a budding historical sense, and with the enthusiasm of the boy of long ago still unabated, I rummaged again in the old trunk. In one of the early logs is listed as mate the name of a man who became in later years a pioneer railroad-builder of the West; here in another, the name of a family now associated with great mill-holdings; here in a bundle of accounts, the record of the beginnings of American participation in the China trade, and a notation telling of the laying of the keel of a tea clipper.

These fragments give direct contact with an American industry that has had far-reaching results beyond the mere barter and sale of oil and bone. A com-

paratively short number of years marked the rise and decline of the whaling industry. It was confined chiefly to the ports between Cape Cod and Long Island, though offshoots extended for a few years to Maine and even to the Hudson River cities of Hudson and Poughkeepsie. Yet its influence on the growth of America was out of all proportion to these confines. To the men engaged actually or as investors in the pursuit of the whale there seemed to come a restless activity which led them continually into other fields of development.

Whaling was a highly precarious speculation, but if at all successful the men engaged in it made considerable profits. It was a business to stir the imagination, for the raw material was sought in every part of the ocean and its products were sold in every part of the world. Comparable only to the Prairie Schooner, the Whaleship will always remain an American epic symbol. It has long been the object of close historical research, it has formed the theme of many a story, and it has been the inspiration for many a picture. But no man in all of the United States has been so fitted to record the story of whaling with brush and pen as the author of this book of drawings. He has grown up amid the scenes of whaling. He has known the men of the older generation, he has participated in the action of the whale-hunt, and he has watched the ships as they dwindled, to sail the seas no more.

Clifford Ashley's brush has helped me to recapture the spirit of the days when I sat on the string-piece of the old Fairhaven wharf, but he tells his story so frankly that even the stranger can scarcely fail to grasp the spirit of what he portrays.

FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

ALBANY, N.Y.
May, 1929

WHALESHIPS OF NEW BEDFORD

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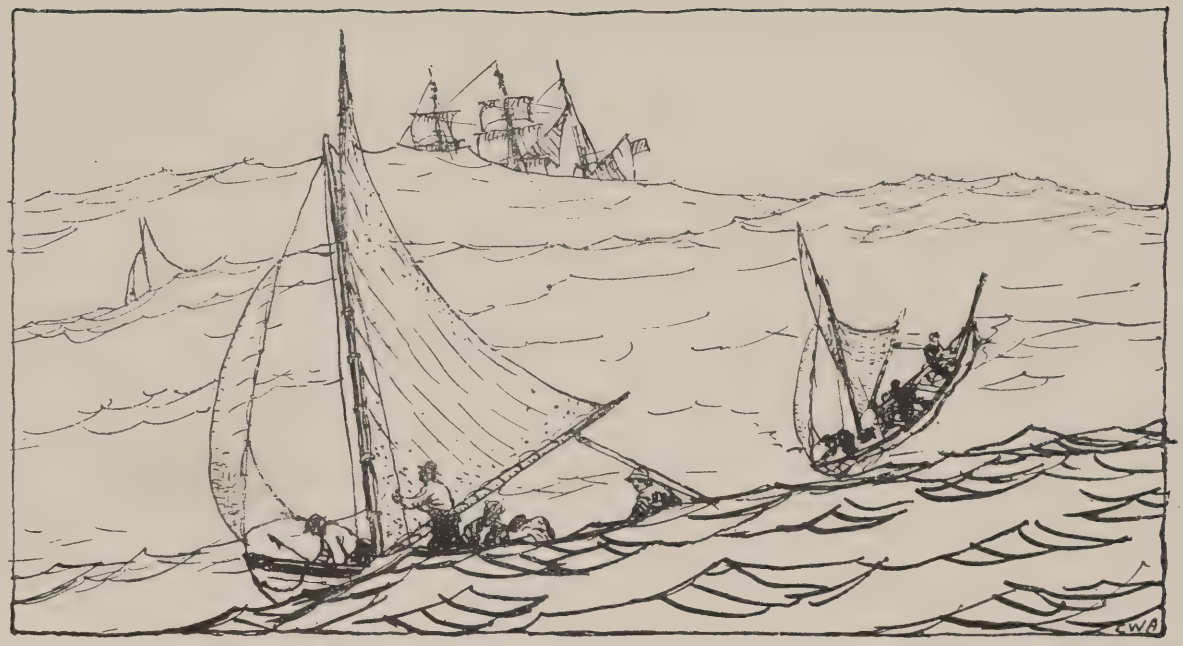
2. DRYING SAILS, NEW BEDFORD HARBOR

3. BARK CALIFORNIA OFF HEN AND CHICKENS LIGHTSHIP



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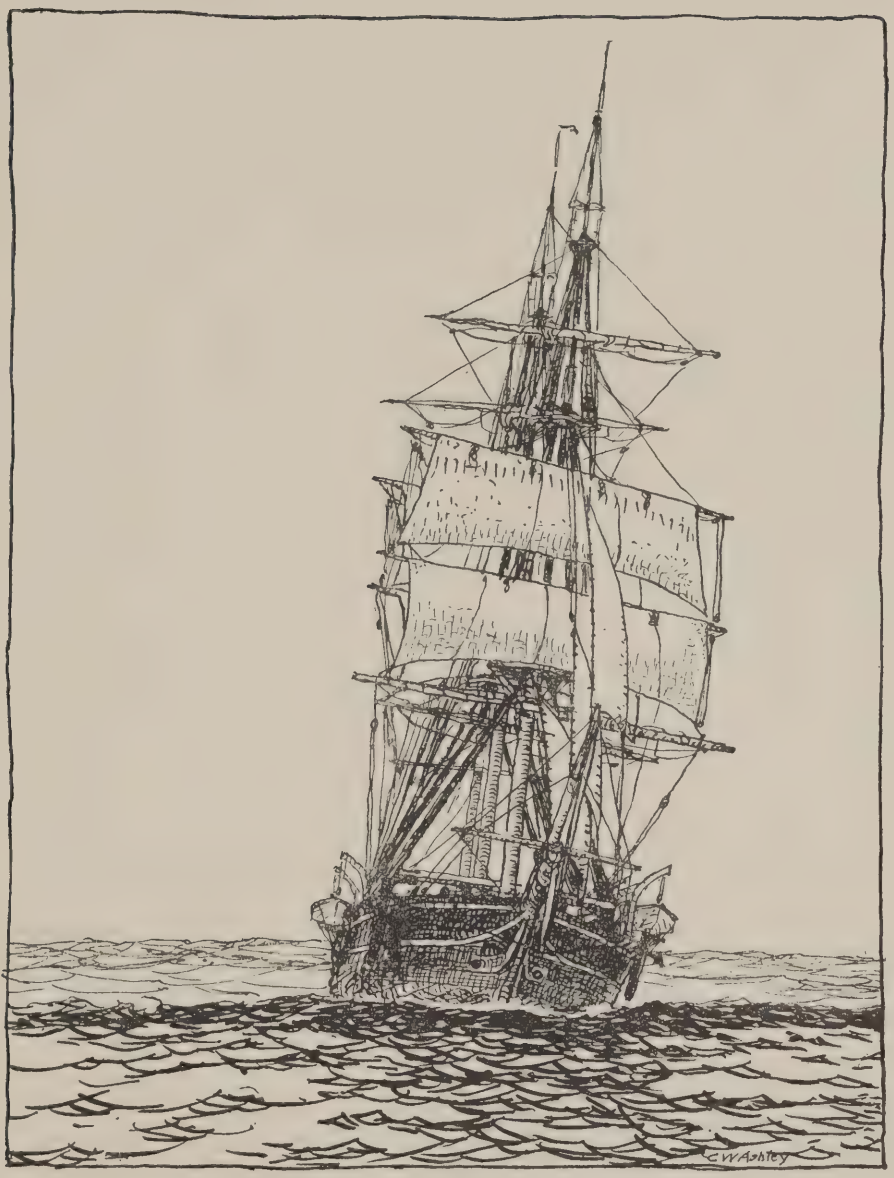

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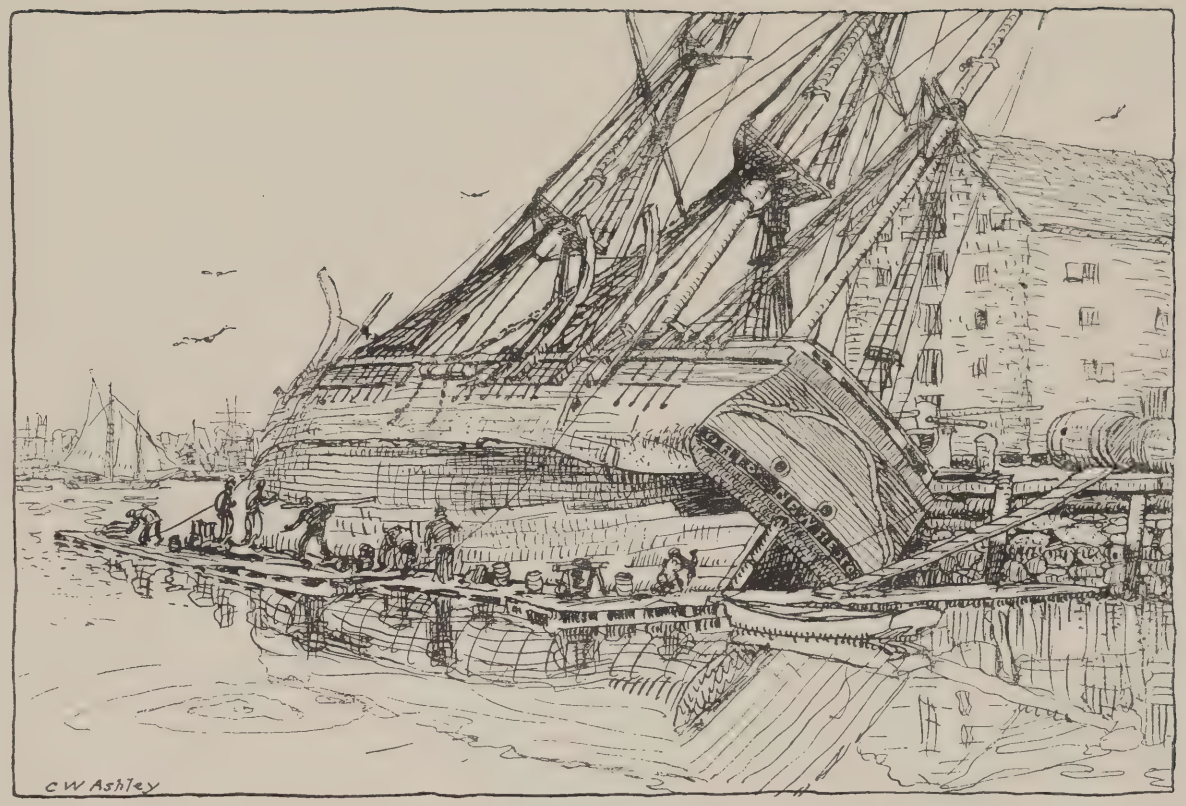

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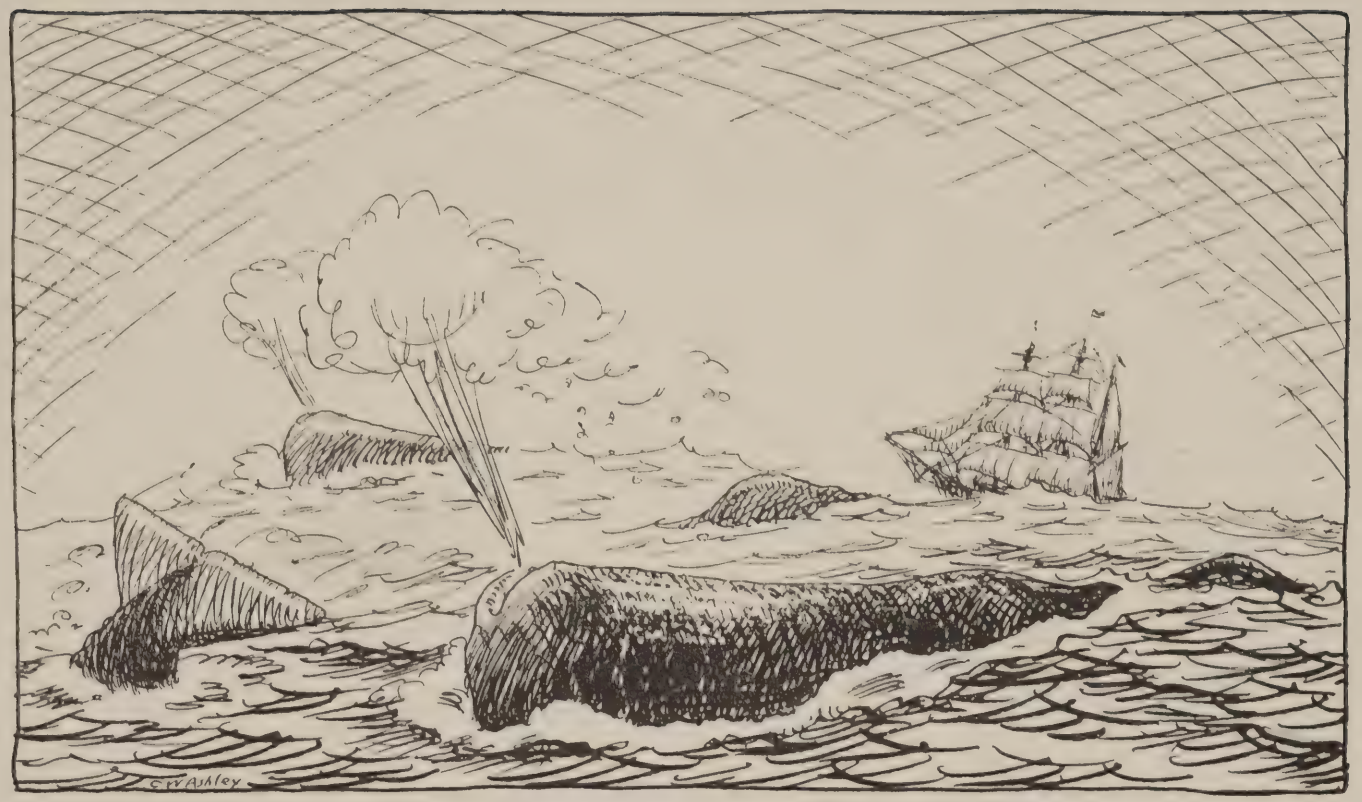
8. BARK CANTON FULL AND BY

9. THE GREYHOUND GOING INTO THE STREAM BEFORE SAILING

10. SHIP JAMES ARNOLD

II. BARK WANDERER



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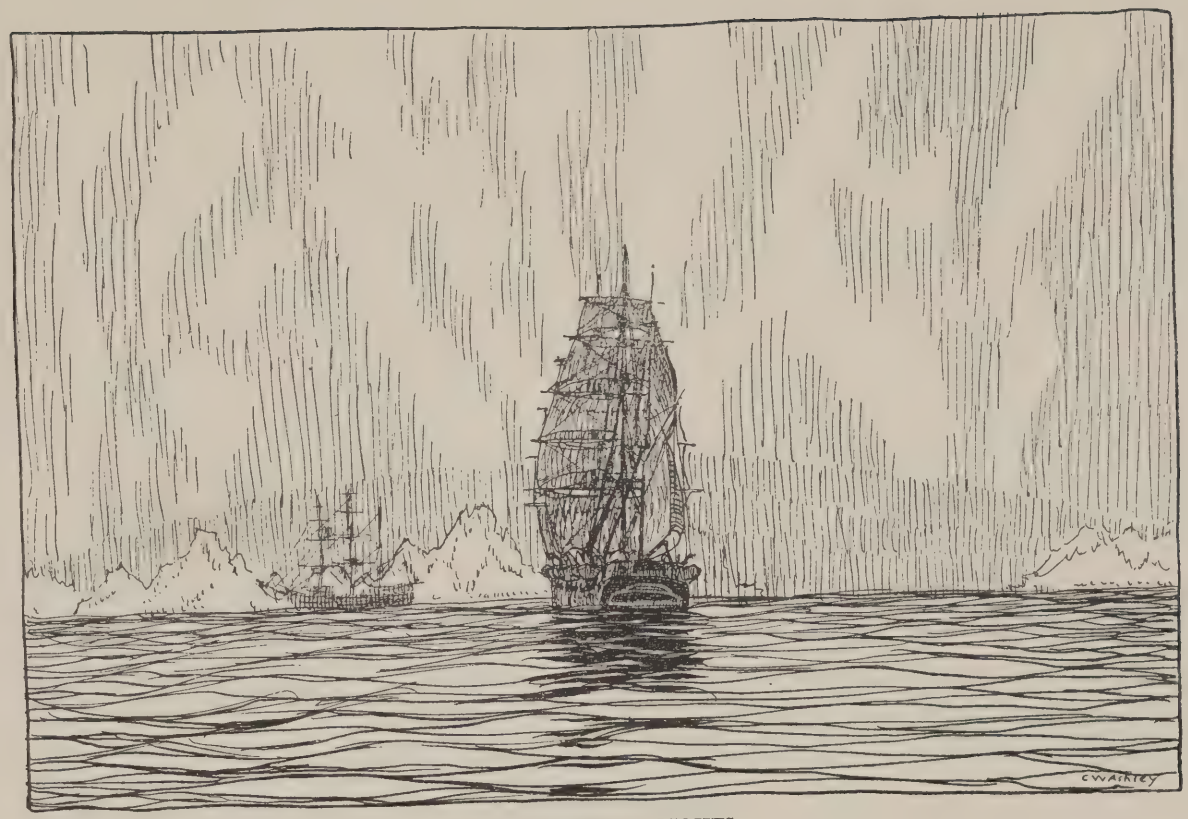

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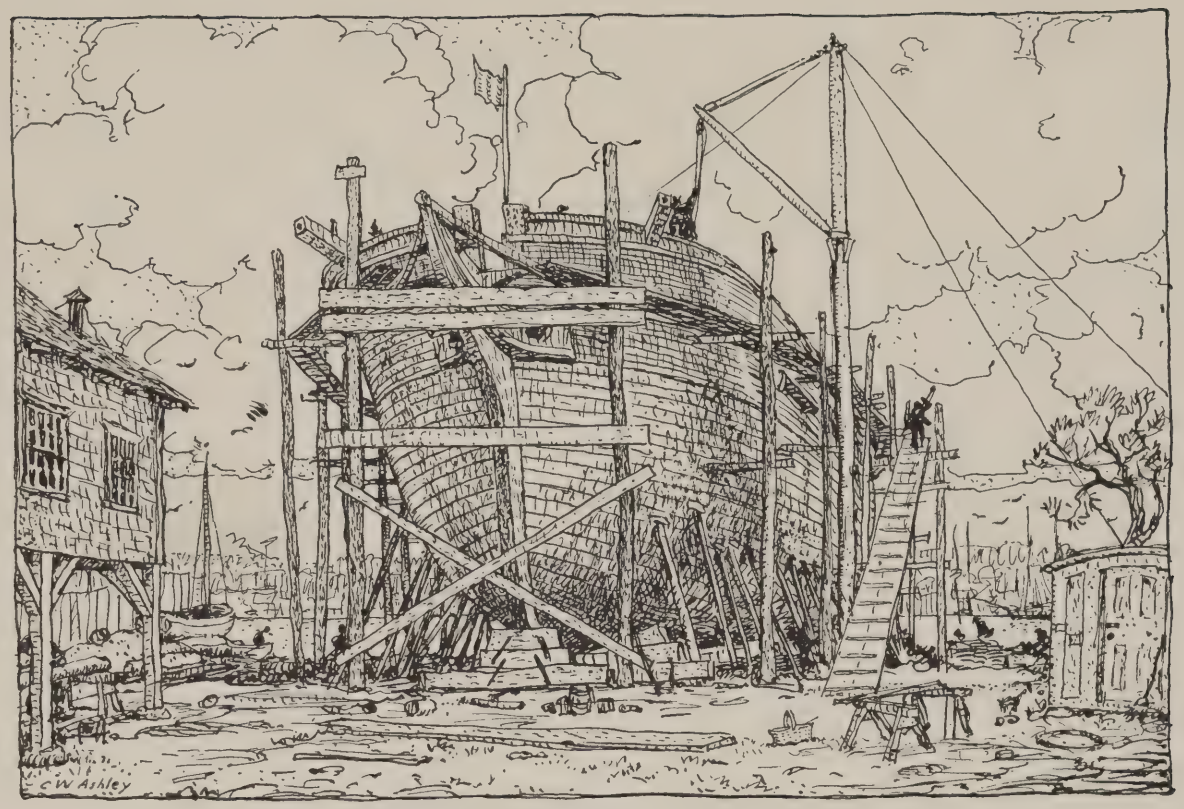

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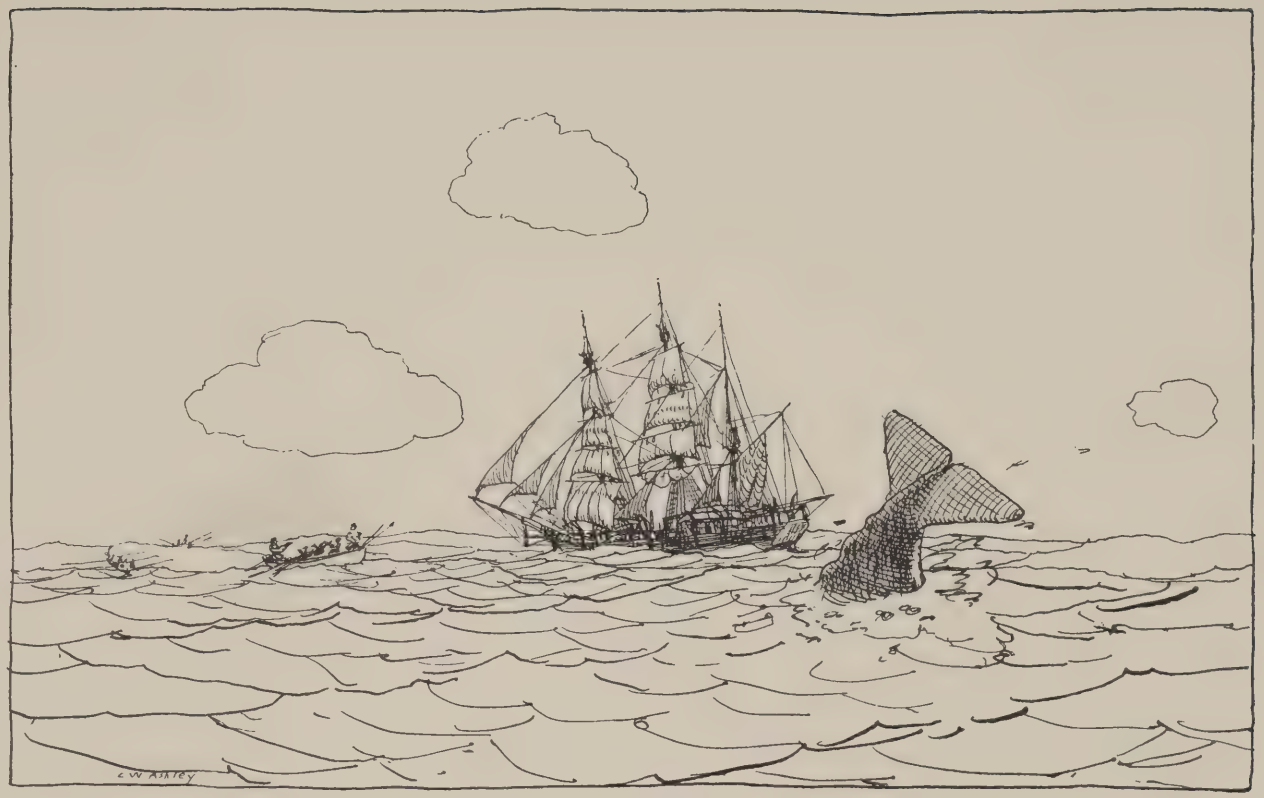
25. BARK SUNBEAM BOILING

26. GRINDSTONE AND COOPER'S DEVIL

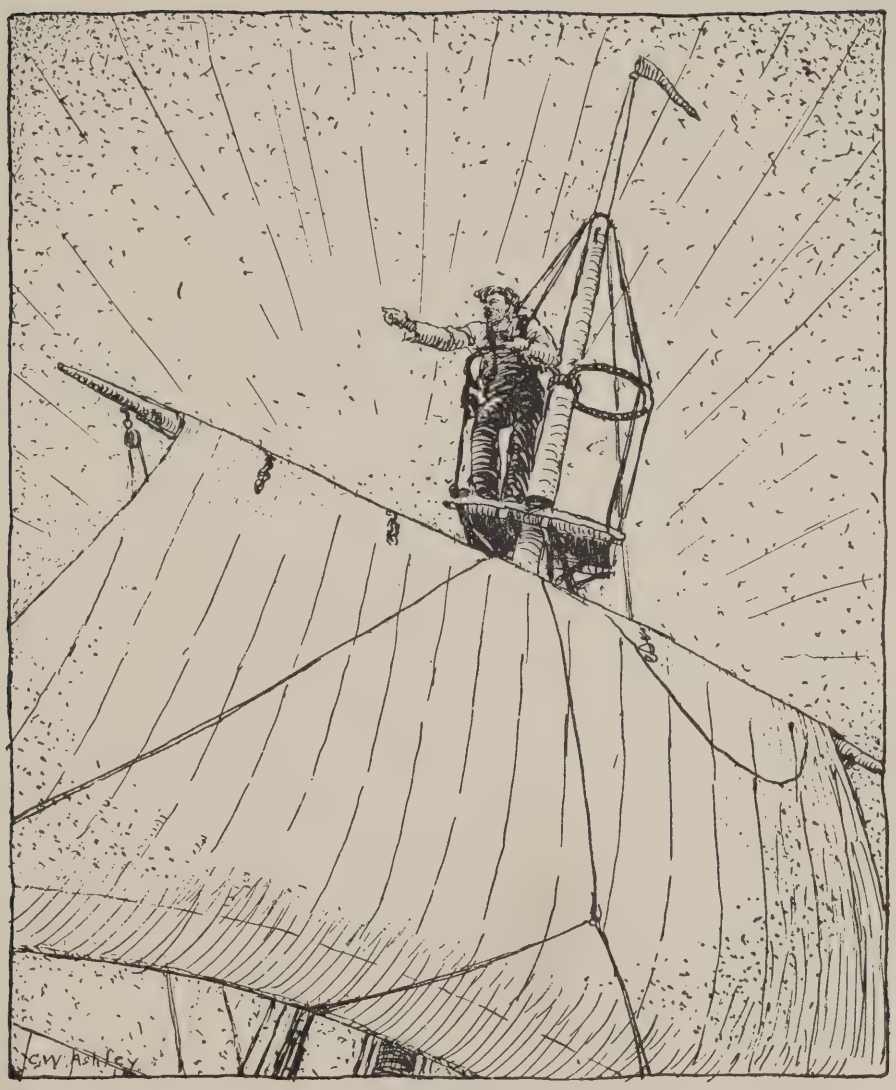
27. BARK STAFFORD ON THE WIND



28. 'THERE GO FLUKES!'

29. A GAM: THE SUNBEAM AND THE MORNING STAR

30. HERMAPHRODITE BRIG OUTWARD BOUND



31. 'AH BLO-O-WS!'

32. A GAM OF BOATS AND A DEAD WHALE

33. BARK DESDEMONA

34. COOPERING OIL, MERRILL'S WHARF

35. REEFING TOPSAILS

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46. BARK DESDEMONA CRUISING

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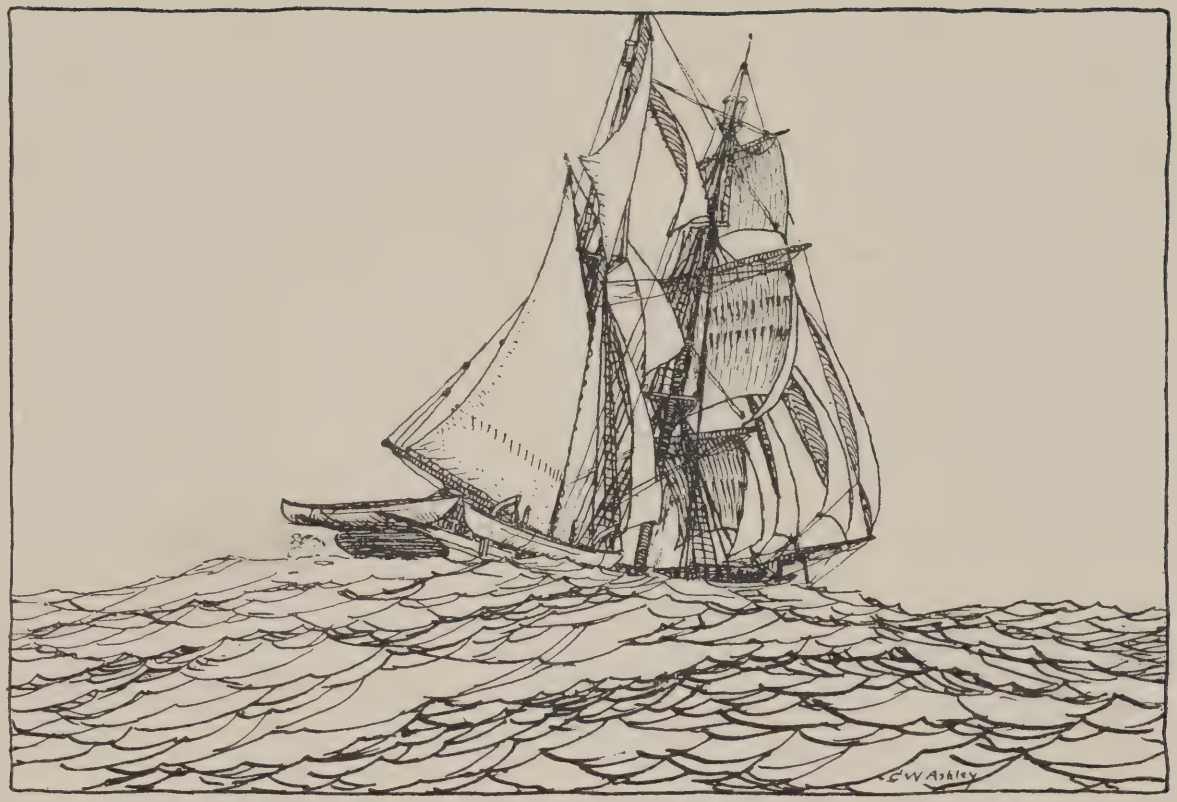

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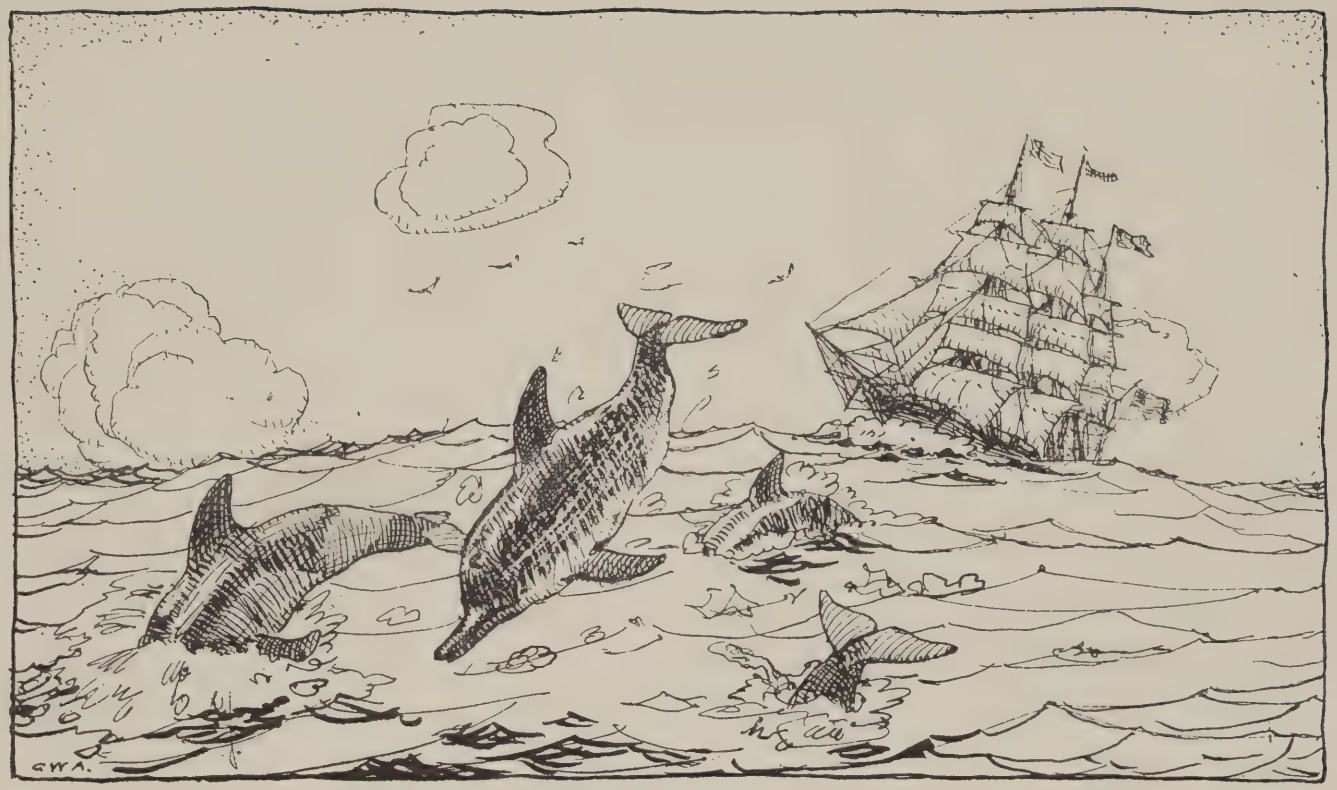

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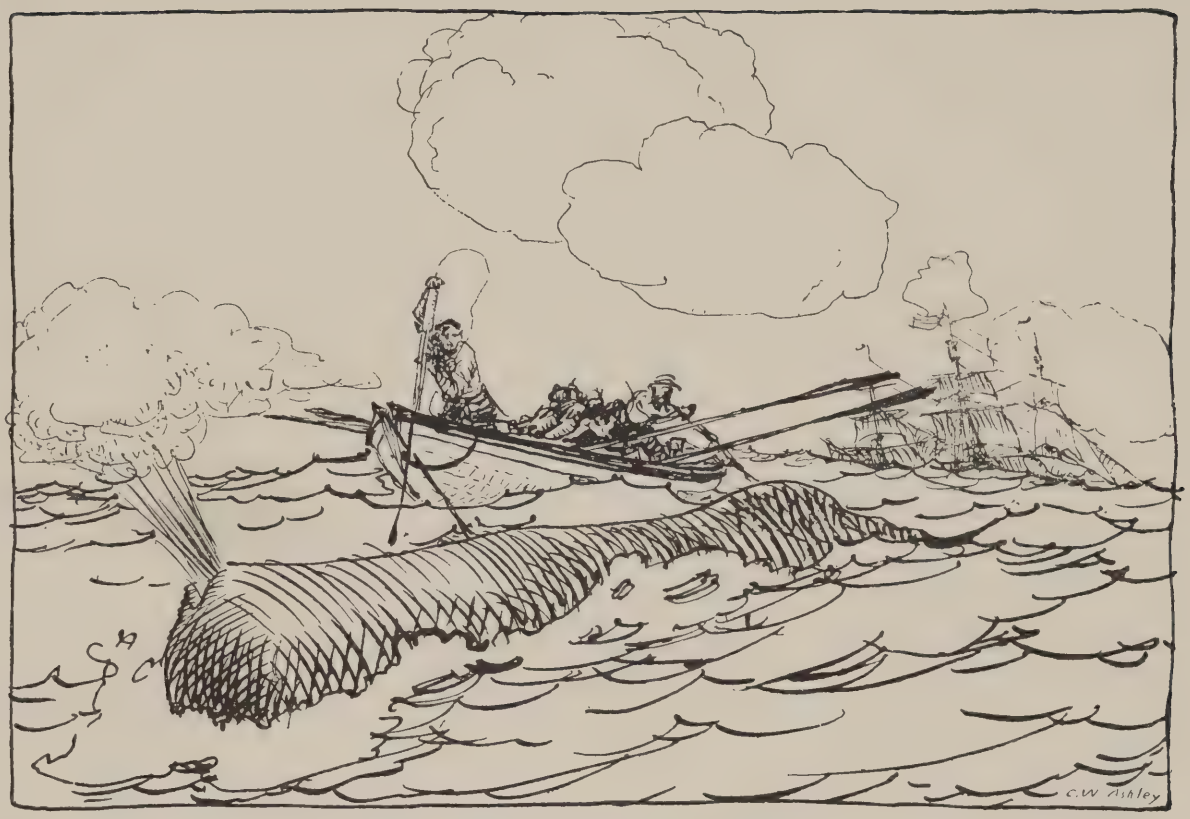
56. THE JAMES ARNOLD

57. THE SUNBEAM'S FORECASTLE

58. WREck OF THE WANDERER, CUTTYHUNK, AUGUST 26, 1924



59. LANCING A WHALE: THE FLURRY

60. HARBOR FURL

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